



All Christians' Fellowship International

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Interactive Sunday School Outline

TOPIC: Everyone's Invited

TEXT: Philemon

Instructions - *Let the above passages be read each time you come together to study this topic so that everyone can participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on the topic and come up with follow-up questions. Participants should be brief in their responses and use relevant Bible references to illustrate their points. They should be careful not to dominate the discussion to allow everyone equal opportunity to participate.*

Introduction - My friend Ray was a dealer in illegal drugs, but meeting Christ brought radical change to his life. He is now one of our church's most enthusiastic members. Well-dressed and socially adept, Ray found quick acceptance and blended easily. One day Ray brought with him two friends struggling with substance abuse. Their hair was unkempt, they wore "street clothing," and they were wary of unfamiliar church surroundings. As Ray introduced them to an elderly woman during the service, the woman coldly turned away without speaking. Their suspicions confirmed, the pair hasn't returned.

The fellowship of believers is intended to be a place of healing, forgiveness, and equality. In a short letter, Paul urges Philemon and his church to restore to their membership a runaway slave, Onesimus.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does Paul hope to accomplish by writing this letter?
2. Paul's other writings show he could express himself in a very authoritative manner. How would you describe the tone of this letter?
3. Think of a time you were asked (or expected) to include someone who was undesirable. How did you respond?
4. How does Paul encourage his readers (vs. 1-7)?
5. What appeal does he then make to them (vs. 8-11)?

6. Onesimus's name means "useful." How does Paul play on this name in verse 11? Why do you think Paul made this joke in a serious letter?
7. What changes are implied in Onesimus's life (vs. 10-12)?
8. Despite the changes, why was Onesimus an unlikely candidate for full acceptance into the church?
9. How does Paul build a case for reconciliation in verses 12-22?
10. What types of people are unlikely candidates for acceptance in your church?
11. Martin Luther wrote, "Even as Christ did for us with God the Father, thus Paul also does for Onesimus with Philemon." How does Paul use his own standing with his readers to further the cause of Onesimus? (See especially vs. 17-18.)
12. How can you stand up for those whom your church might over-look or even reject?